

Pipelines and Pathways into the Information Professions

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Abstract

i3 and other pipeline initiatives create opportunities for students from diverse and non-IS backgrounds to enter the information fields. The purpose of this session is to celebrate the work of existing pipeline initiatives, collaborate around the enduring problem of diversifying the information professions, and create new knowledge about obstacles and barriers that current and former information school graduate students face when it comes to preparing for or completing graduating education at an information school.

Keywords: diversity; pipelines; student development; graduate preparation

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1 Purpose and Intended Audience

The purpose of this interactive session is to bring together members of the iSchool community to identify social and technical skills that prepare students from underrepresented groups for graduate study--and subsequent academic careers--in the information sciences. All are welcome, though we are especially interested in talking with a diverse array of graduate students about the things that have been most helpful to them in pursuing and completing a graduate degree within an information school. The event will spotlight the i3 initiative and be co-facilitated by the 2014 i3 Teaching Fellows.

1.1 What is i3?

The iSchool Inclusion Institute (i3) is a pipeline initiative funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and hosted each year by the University of Pittsburgh's iSchool. The program, now entering its fifth year, introduces undergraduate students from underrepresented groups to the information sciences and prepares them for graduate work. Each summer, a cohort of 20-25 i3 Scholars spend four weeks at the University of Pittsburgh, learning the basics of research design and programming, as well as gaining an introduction to the wide variety of cross-disciplinary research that is being conducted within the iSchools. During their time in Pittsburgh, i3 scholars form teams that undertake a research project over the course of the following year, under the supervision of a faculty or graduate student advisor. i3 Scholars return to Pittsburgh the following summer to present their research projects.

A total of 84 students have participated in the program. Of 45 alumni who have completed their bachelors degree, 19 are currently enrolled in masters or doctoral programs (or have completed a graduate degree); 16 of these at iSchools. Six i3 research projects have been presented as posters at past iConferences.

2 Proposed Activities

2.1 Length of Event

90 minutes.

2.2 Agenda

5 minutes: Welcome and overview of i3 program.

10 minutes: Brief presentation from i3 Director about the importance of pipeline initiatives and what initiatives currently exist in iSchools. Introduction of 2014 i3 Teaching Fellows.

10 minutes: Working individually, participants will create an illustration of their personal pathway to graduate school, including key relationships/mentors, work/volunteer experience, undergraduate research or other skill-building opportunities, obstacles, etc.

10 minutes: In a large group, participants share highlights from their personal pathways.

20 minutes: Participants will form small groups based on the most influential components of their own pathway (e.g., mentorship, undergraduate research experience, etc.). Each group will create an aggregate mind map (or similar visual representation) of their collective experiences related to the topic they have organized around—which will identify gaps in knowledge or things they wish they had known before undertaking graduate work at an information school.

30 minutes: Small groups will briefly present their mind maps, and the larger group will brainstorm ways to address the collectively-identified knowledge and experience gaps that present key obstacles or barriers for students wishing to enter the information schools.

5 minutes: Thank yous, reminder of opportunities to get involved with i3 (guest speakers, teaching fellows, project advisors, etc.)

2.3 Follow-through

The results of the session, with the consent of participants, will be posted online on the i3 website (www.ischool-inclusion.org). In addition, questions that emerge during group discussions will be posted to Twitter from @i3program and include the official iConference hashtag (#iConf15).

3 Relevance to the Conference/Significance to the Field

i3 and other pipeline initiatives create opportunities for students from diverse and non-IS backgrounds to enter the information fields. The purpose of this session is to celebrate the work of existing pipeline initiatives, collaborate around the enduring problem of diversifying the information professions, and create new knowledge about obstacles and barriers that current and former information school graduate students face when it comes to preparing for or completing graduating education at an information school.